



THE HON PAUL FLETCHER MP
Minister for Families and Social Services

MEDIA RELEASE

2 March 2019

Liberal National Government provides \$2.13 million to help Cape York Indigenous break welfare cycle

A new mobile and desktop app will be at the centre of an innovative trial that aims to connect Indigenous Australians with education, employment and financial support services while providing incentives to meet personal goals.

Minister for Families and Social Services, Paul Fletcher, today announced \$2.13 million to fund the Opportunity Account project as part of the Australian Government's Try, Test and Learn Fund.

The Cape York Institute, founded by Indigenous leader Noel Pearson, will deliver the trial.

"We know that young Indigenous people aged 16 to 24 face a lack of employment and educational opportunities and are at risk of receiving income support for the longer term," Mr Fletcher said.

"This project is about positive reinforcement and will be designed to motivate young Indigenous people in Cape York to take productive steps towards finding and keeping work.

"Through the *Opportunity Account* app, young people will have the chance to register their goals, targets and behaviours and find ways to improve their employability and build their financial capability in practical and easy ways that make sense in their daily life.

"Using behaviour change techniques that will give participants the choice to make rewarding decisions, the app will prompt positive change through straightforward financial and job readiness tools like checklists and calculators, as well as behavioural nudges and reminders."

Participants will also have access to Cape York Partnership's case management services and the purpose-built 'O-Hub', a one-stop-shop for self-service computers and learning programs that encourage and support individuals to take responsibility for their own finances, health and education.

Noel Pearson said that having the same opportunities and choices in employment as everyone else was vital to the individual and social wellbeing of young Indigenous people.

“The Opportunity Account is an important first. We want to develop a pathway that will incentivise people to voluntarily opt-out of welfare and dependency, onto a pathway of opportunity and work,” Mr Pearson said.

“The Opportunity Account will fill the gap between the welfare system and existing programs and support services. For example, a participant might use the app to help with budgeting and through it find out about health services they could also access.”

Extensive research and engagement with the local community will be conducted to tailor the design of the app to the needs of the young people in the region.

It is estimated that 44 per cent of 16 to 24 year olds residing in regional or remote Queensland who are currently receiving income support will be receiving income support payments in 10 years, and 36 per cent will be receiving income support payments in 20 years.

The \$96.1 million Try, Test and Learn Fund uses insights from the Australian Priority Investment Approach to Welfare to trial new or innovative approaches to assist some of the most vulnerable in society onto a path towards stable, sustainable independence.

ENDS

Media contact:

Craig Regan 0408 448 527 | craig.regan@dss.gov.au